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CHALLENGE

JOIN THE REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PROGRESSIVE LABOR PARTY

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As Guerrilla Attacks Intensify in Iraq:

ANGRY GI WIVES CHASE BRASS, WANT TROOPS OUT

While Bush, who used his father's connections to avoid combat during the Vietnam War, poses on aircraft carriers and yells, "Bring 'em on" at Iraqi resisters, a colonel at Fort Stewart, Ga. had to be escorted from a meeting with 800 seething spouses, mostly wives. "They were crying, cussing, yelling and screaming for their men to come back." (New York Times, 7/4)

To U.S. soldiers in Iraq and their relatives at home, the battle cry is "Bring us home!" Many realize that the invasion of Iraq was for control of oil, that brings super-profits for a few companies and world domination for the U.S. ruling class.

In a front-page report on the growing anger among military families, the Times reports of "…anger that the talk in Washington is not of taking troops out of Iraq, but of sending more in. I want my husband home," said Ms. Leila, mother of three. "…They have become police in a place they're not welcome."

Since May 1, when Bush declared major combat over, more than 60 Americans have died including 25 killed in hostile encounters. That's half the number killed in the two-month war, and they are mostly low-ranking ground troops, performing mundane activities like buying a video, going on patrol or guarding a trash pit.

A July 1st Gallup poll found 42% of the public think the war is going badly, up from 13% in May. Similarly, only 56% think the war is going well, down from 86 percent in May.

"The soldiers were supposed to be welcomed by waving crowds. Where did those people go?" said Kim Franklin, whose husband is part of an artillery unit commanded by Ms. Leila's husband.

Seven soldiers from Fort Hood have been killed and on July 4th, it was downright depressing. People are dreading that knock on the

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Ongoing War Shakes U.S. 'Invincibility'

When they're not lying through their teeth, U.S. military officials have a talent for stating the obvious. "We're still at war," declared the U.S. commander in Iraq on July 3, a day when 10 U.S. soldiers were wounded in three separate attacks. Two days later, an explosion in the city of Ramadi killed seven Iraqis who were about to graduate as cops for the puppet police force the U.S. government is building to replace Saddam Hussein's thugs. Seventy others were wounded.

The New York Times (7/4) labels this fighting as "continuing attacks from disparate but increasingly organized Iraqi guerrillas." This isn't surprising. Dead or alive, Saddam Hussein still has loyalists willing to do battle. As ongoing armed struggle proves — from Afghanistan to Chechnya — Islamic fundamentalism beyond Iraq also has plenty of fight left in it and plenty of recruits willing to cross borders to serve it. Iraq is a logical flashpoint for this struggle.

By itself, the ongoing violence in Iraq won't end the U.S. occupation, at least not soon. And it won't stop U.S. rulers' plans for future wars they deem necessary to maintain their global empire. But these attacks underscore two potentially serious weaknesses in U.S. imperialism's seeming invincibility. As the international situation sharpens, our Party can take advantage of these weaknesses to spread its revolutionary communist ideas and to grow among soldiers, workers and students.

The first weakness is mounting unrest among rank-and-file soldiers and their families. Bush & Co. all but promised that this war would have the easy-on, easy-off character of a super highway. Now that the reality of a long occupation has settled in, the U.S. military rank and file's weak political commitment to imperialism is becoming apparent. The Christian Science Monitor (7/7) reports: "Experts warn that long, frequent deployments could lead to a rash of departures from the military. 'Hordes of active-duty troops and reservists may soon leave the service rather than subject themselves to a life continually on the road,' writes Michael O'Hanlon, a military expert at the Brookings Institution." Said one GI to Rumsfeld: "…our sorry asses are ready to come home." (For further evidence, see adjoining article.)

These signs hardly reflect a willingness to "bear any burden" or "pay any price" — as Kennedy put it in his 1961 inaugural speech — for the sake of U.S. imperialism's needs. JFK was alluding to the big bosses' already developed plans for war in Vietnam.

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EDITORIAL: Vietnam Syndrome Emerging in Iraq?

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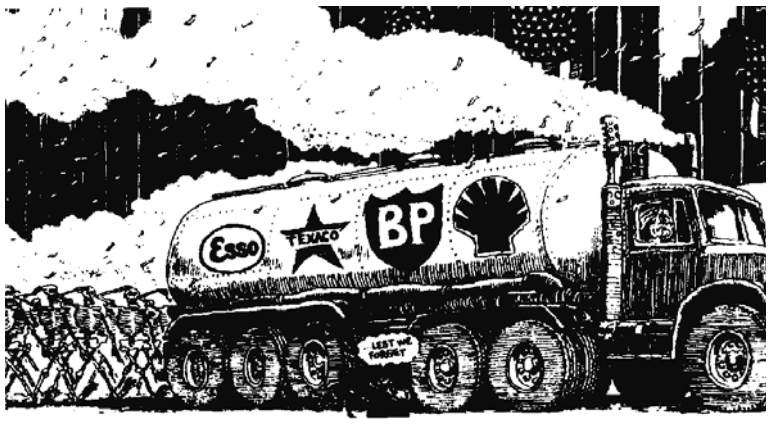
The "Vietnam Syndrome," the potentially mutinous refusal to fight for the bosses' flag, remains alive and well among U.S. troops in Iraq and throughout the U.S. military. It won't transform itself spontaneously into revolutionary consciousness or action, but it provides increasingly fertile ground for bold, resourceful organizing by communist cadre in our Party.

U.S. rulers' second key weakness stems from their relative position of strength and is closely related to the first.

"There is organized resistance to the American presence, and they are getting smarter about the way they do it."

—West Virginia Senator Jay Rockefeller

The 146,000 troops in Iraq aren't nearly the number they need for an effective occupation. That's the conclusion of nine Republican and Democrat U.S. senators after a three-day inspection tour. "Our troops are stretched very thin," complains Carl Levin, the senior Democrat on the Armed Services Committee. Levin's gripe echoes the prediction made by former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki, who had called for "several hundred thousand soldiers" to turn Iraq into an effective client state for U.S. bosses. The Times describes Shinseki's estimate as "looking more prophetic each day." Senator Jay Rockefeller of West Virginia chimed in: "There is organized resistance to the American presence, and they are getting smarter about the way they do it." (7/4).



Rockefeller speaks for the liberal wing of U.S. bosses, who are impatient with Bush's go-slow, piecemeal approach to homeland fascism, his half-measure plans for foreign wars and his clumsy lies to justify them. As the 2004 presidential campaign approaches, look for the liberals to come up with a slicker sales pitch for the police state and wider military adventures. Some of its elements include Harlem Congressman Rangel's scheme to restore the draft as a way to divide the burden of military service "more equally" among rich and poor.

What Rangel, Rockefeller, and the rest of the liberal politicians really mean is that the several hundred thousand troops they want to add in Iraq are a drop in the bucket compared to U.S. imperialism's needs over the next 20 years. The true number is in the millions. Our Party's key task in the period ahead will remain the transformation of working-class anger, embodied by GIs in Iraq and their relatives at Fort Stewart, into communist consciousness. These soldiers and their wives don't know it yet, but they are potential recruits to PLP and the Red Army that will eventually smash U.S. imperialism.✪

GI Wives Chase Brass

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door. What's more, an Army study showed that divorce rates at certain Army bases rose 50% after the first Persian Gulf war.

Army Is a Reflection of a Racist, Exploitative Society

Most soldiers joined the military out of necessity, not because of patriotism or to kill and die for ExxonMobil. The "economic draft" promises them training and education for future careers. But most soldiers earn little more than the minimum wage, and even with subsidies for housing and meals, life is harsh. Since December, Feed the Children — which runs a relief program for military families — has provided 100,000 tons of food to 6,200 families who have spouses in the war zone at 12 military bases.

Racism is also central to military life. A good chunk of infantry soldiers doing the crap work are black and Latinos and immigrants. Over 28,000 immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, fought in Iraq with the hope of becoming citizens.

Racism is also central to military life. A good chunk of infantry soldiers doing the crap work are black and Latinos and immigrants. Over 28,000 immigrants, mostly from Mexico and Central America, fought in Iraq with the hope of becoming citizens.

Fancy hi-tech weapons and murderous bombing raids are not effective in guerrilla and urban warfare. As the trial draws closer of a black soldier accused of killing his officers in Iraq, morale is plummeting and the Vietnam Syndrome is very much alive. (See page 8 on black GI rebellions inside Vietnam during that war and on the brass's racism.) Bush and his gang have turned the "Butcher of Baghdad" into a "national hero" for leading the resistance (probably with help from other Arab bosses who want to turn Iraq into a quagmire for the U.S.).

Contrary to many in the anti-war movement who either dismiss all GIs or pander to patriotism, GIs have more in common with workers in Iraq than with the warmongers in Washington. The growing anger among soldiers and their relatives can fuel a movement opposing imperialist war and fighting for international solidarity among all workers. Building a mass base for CHALLENGE and recruiting to PLP can prepare workers and soldiers to smash imperialism and fight for communism.✪

PLP Must Test the Limits

The comment following last issue's (7/9) letter "JROTC Teaches Lies About Bosses' War" refers to "the birth of the Vietnam Syndrome." I had the honor of seeing this process unfold first hand, while doing political work in the bosses' army during the Vietnam War. It was an eye-opening experience for this then new, relatively inexperienced comrade. Nevertheless, I feel compelled to warn against viewing the late 1960s as the "glory days."

Our Party led revolts in my battalion. Yet, even in those heady days of anti-imperialist, anti-revisionist struggle, we still required a year of patient but intense ideological struggle, base-building and agitation before we were able to lead rebellions. And then we didn't recruit nearly enough to the Party. Relying on spontaneity will get you nowhere.

Today's different political period, with its less inviting environment, limits our successes. But those limits are not cast in stone.

Surely, when "800 seething spouses" (New York Times 7/4) chase a colonel from a meeting meant to reassure the families of U.S. soldiers in Iraq, we must check to see if the limits are expanding. We do that by increasing our work.

This not only tests the limits, but can also change them. The year of ideological struggle, base-building and agitation changed the limits in my battalion when I was in the Army. The internal struggle is always primary.

Red Veteran

WHAT WE FIGHT FOR:

✪PLP fights to smash capitalism—wage slavery. While the bosses and their mouthpieces claim "communism is dead," capitalism is the real failure for billions all over the world. The Soviet Union and China returned to capitalism because socialism maintained too many aspects of capitalism, like wages and divisions of labor.

✪Capitalism inevitably leads to wars. PLP organizes workers, students and soldiers to turn these wars into a revolution for communism. This fight for the dictatorship of the proletariat requires a mass Red Army led by the communist PLP.

✪Communism means working collectively to build a society based on need. We will abolish work for wages, money and profit. Everyone will share society's benefits and burdens.

✪Communism means abolishing racism and the concept of race.

✪Communism means abolishing the special oppression of women workers.

✪Communism means abolishing nations which leads to nationalism. One international working class, one world, one Party.

✪Communism means the Party leads every aspect of society. For this to work, millions of workers, eventually everyone must become communist organizers.

JOIN US!

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UAW TRADING LOW WAGES FOR MORE MEMBERS

"There's been such a blood bath that the UAW now accepts that this is the best they're going to get." Dan Luria, a labor analyst at the Michigan Manufacturing Technology Center, was referring to the union's strategy of trading lower pay for more members as contract talks begin with GM, Ford and DaimlerChrysler. Contracts covering 280,000 workers and $30 billion in annual labor costs expire Sept. 14.

General Motors wants to reduce pension and retiree health benefits that add $1,360 to the cost of each GM vehicle. (Honda's pension and retiree health costs are just $107 per vehicle.) When asked whether GM was preparing for a strike, chief financial officer John Devine said, "You might draw that conclusion." GM's stockpile of 1.24 million cars and trucks (normal inventories are about 1million), would allow the world's biggest automaker to resist a strike for about three weeks longer.

Ford wants to close four U.S. factories and eliminate 15,000 jobs. DaimlerChrysler wants to sell five parts plants and cut $240 million in annual labor costs. In May, DaimlerChrysler canceled plans to build a $1.5 billion assembly complex in Windsor, Ontario, due to "the deteriorating economy" and "overcapacity in the North American industry." The "modular assembly" complex would have employed 1,000 workers in an assembly plant surrounded by 1,500 lower-paid workers in supplier factories built on the grounds. The Canadian Auto Workers union had already reached a "special agreement" with the company.

The UAW is fighting for survival, while trying to bend over backwards to bail out the auto bosses. The traditional "Big 3" share of the domestic auto market is shrinking while non-union transplants from Europe and Asia are growing. Nissan, Toyota, Honda and Daimler, to name a few, are all building new non-union plants in Ohio, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas. They pay comparable wages to U.S. auto makers but with no pensions, fewer medical costs, no health and safety restrictions and no grievance procedure. UAW membership has fallen to 638,722 workers, down from 1.5 million in 1979. Union workers build only 60% of the cars and trucks made in the U.S. and Canada, down from 82% in 1978. The ratio of U.S. parts workers who belong to unions has dropped from 1 in 2 in 1979 to 1 in 7 today. The union wants the "Big 3" auto makers to help them organize new members, especially among supplier parts plants. Dan Poole, a vice president at National City Bank said, "From the auto companies' perspective, what are they giving up? Not a darn thing."

Recently DaimlerChrysler agreed to sell its New Castle, Ind., plant to Metaldyne for $233 million. The factory makes gears, control arms and ball joints that connect wheels to car and truck bodies.

Metaldyne and the UAW reached a tentative contract that reduces wages for the 1,200 workers from $26/hour to $16/hour and increases health care costs to workers as much as $46 a week for families. In return, Metaldyne agreed not to oppose union organizing at their 10 non-union factories, granting the UAW a "card check," which means the union can avoid an NLRB election and "represent" the workers when more than 50% sign cards. Workers won't vote on the new contract until September, and only if they promise to stay at Metaldyne. Those who plan on leaving or transferring to other Chrysler plants will be ineligible to vote.

The UAW hopes to "organize" 45,000 parts workers over the next three years by relying on the biggest auto bosses to pressure their suppliers, like Johnson Controls, Tower Automotive Inc., Magna International Inc. and ThyssenKrupp AG. In return, they will help boost productivity and keep labor costs down to increase profits at the suppliers and the Big 3. Johnson Controls pledged "neutrality" in 26 factories after the UAW staged a two day strike that halted production at DaimlerChrysler and GM. The union has since "organized" nine Johnson Controls factories.

This year the UAW will also negotiate contracts at Delphi Corp. and Visteon Corp. Delphi Corp., the world's largest parts company, was spun off by General Motors in 1999. Third-ranked Visteon Corp. was spun off by Ford in 2000. In 1999, both companies agreed to match the hourly pay at GM and Ford, while slashing 17% and 12% of their respective work forces. If the UAW wants them to adopt a neutral stance during organizing drives at their own suppliers, the trade-off will be paying new hires closer to Metaldyne's $16/hour than DaimlerChrysler's $26.

German auto workers on strike for thirty-five hour work-week.

Industrial workers worldwide are in a race to the bottom as the imperialists struggle for markets, cheap labor and resources sharpens. Nationalism has chained union leaders to the respective bosses and put them at odds with their class brothers and sisters around the world. This deadly rivalry is leading to unending wars, during which union leaders trap us "in the tent of their masters." Our main task among many is to build a mass base for CHALLENGE and PLP in the factories and mills across all borders. Only then will we have a chance of turning their next world war into an armed insurrection for communist revolution.✪

Union Hacks' Proposed Pay Cuts No Answer to VW Mass Layoffs

PUEBLA, MEXICO, July 1 — Volkswagen has just announced a 24% production cut here, laying off 2,000 workers. VW bosses said the production and job cuts were the "natural result" of falling sales in the U.S. market. The job losses are devastating for VW workers as well as for the entire region, which depends on these jobs.

The plant's 160 suppliers will eliminate another 6,000 jobs. (La Jornada, 7/2) Alcoa Fujikura of Puebla (formerly Siemens), which supplies electrical systems for the Jetta A4, New Beetle and Beetle Cabrio models, might eliminate 25% of its 1,400 workers. About 85% of the workers are women, and 80% of them are single mothers. They earn between 68-120 pesos a day (between $7-$12), while VW workers, most of them men, earn 200-400 pesos a day (about $20-$40). A reduction in the workweek to avoid job cuts will be even more devastating for these women workers, who capitalism attacks even harder.

VW's 2003 production will sink to 270,000 (from a projected 330,000 units). In 1999 and 2000, when VW introduced the new Beetle model, it produced 400,000 units yearly.

The cutbacks are occurring 45 days before the current contract with the Independent Union of VW Workers (SITIAVW) expires. In March 2002, the union proposed wage cuts to avoid mass layoffs, but over half the workers voted for job cuts (with higher severance pay) instead.

Union head José Luis Rodríguez said the current layoffs "won't tie our hands in negotiating wage hikes and renewal of the contract. On the contrary, they're separate things." (La Jornada, Mexico, 7/1). But in mass assemblies, the union leadership has won most of the 10,200 VW workers to ask for a four-day workweek and a 20% wage cut instead of job cuts. VW workers have a long history of militancy, but militancy is not enough. We waged mass strikes prior to the 2002 contract, yet here we are facing even sharper attacks. We don't need union leaders who would have us choose between layoffs and pay cuts, "natural" under capitalism. We need a revolutionary movement that will create the alternative of communism and workers' power over the profit system. "Workers of the World, Unite!"✪

I.G. METALL FAILS TO WIN 'EVEN A MINOR VICTORY'

For four-weeks, auto and steel workers in eastern Germany struck to cut the workweek from 38 to 35 hours, as in western Germany. According to the Wall Street Journal (7/1), "It was the first time since 1954 that the powerful I.G. Metall union…failed to eke out even a minor victory, highlighting the waning influence of unions in Europe's largest economy and likely signaling further weakening to come."

Unions may lose the power to set nationwide wage agreements for entire sectors and be forced to proceed industry by industry. Social-democratic Primer Minister Schröder is trying to cut benefits for unemployed workers while giving tax cuts to the rich to try to revive the ailing economy.

The defeat has provoked an intense struggle among the union leaders of IG Metall. Unions in Germany sit on the Supervisory Boards (Boards of Directors) of companies, like DaimlerChrysler A.G., Deutsche Bank AG, etc. Union hacks serve on government panels for healthcare and pensions. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1991, union membership grew to 35% with the influx of workers from the former East Germany. Today, it's down to 22%.

After World War II — when workers worldwide were inspired by the example of a workers' state, the Soviet Union, having just defeated the Nazis — the "specter of communism" and the shadow of the Soviet Union forced Western Europe's bosses to make concessions to the workers to keep them from rebelling against capitalism. Union leaders, like those of IG Metall, were

made part of the system. But the defeat of the old communist movement has led to a deepening crisis of capitalism and a sharpening rivalry among the imperialists. In order to compete with their rivals, particularly U.S. imperialism, German bosses must increasingly attack "their own" workers. They are following the pattern set in the 1980s by Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the U.S. The old social contract is over. This assault on industrial workers will finance the bosses' war machine.

The sharpening rivalry among the imperialists will keep all the pro-capitalist union hacks, from IG Metall to the UAW in the U.S., firmly in the tent of their bosses. The nationalist, patriotic slogans to "Buy American" or "German Jobs for German Workers" will ultimately have the union leaders leading us to war to save "our" bosses. We need to use these struggles to build red leadership in the factories and mills across all borders to smash the war makers and strike breakers.✪

'Negligence': Another Word for Murder by Racist Cops

NEWARK, NJ, July 2 — The relatives and friends of Santiago Villanueva, murdered by Bloomfield cops, left the Essex County Supreme Court angry and frustrated at the judge's postponement of a second hearing until Sept. 27. Then proofs were to be presented against the four cops accused of killing the 35-year-old Dominican-born worker and musician.

The lawyers for cops Richard Chiarello, Vincent DeFabrizio, Gerald Fillipone and Frank Furfaro asked Judge Harold Fullilove for another postpoment, claiming they couldn't get photos and copies of the victim's autopsy.

On April 17, 2002, Villanueva suffered an epilepsy attack at the Quick Cut plant where he had worked for a year. When emergency service was called, the four cops came instead, ignored his epilepetic attack, handcuffed Villanueva, assuming he was on drugs and then, according to the medical examimer, the cops asphyxiated him, causing his death.

Some people at the trial, including 80 supporters who protested outside, accused the cops' lawyers of trying to buy time so witnesses don't testifiy. Some of these witnesses say they've been threatened.

The chances of cops accused of murder being jailed are extremely low. Cops are the bosses' hired goons, used to enforce the racism which provides super-profits for the bosses, based on the super-exploitation of black, Latino and Asian workers.✪

Racism Kills Black and White Workers in War Plant

MERIDIAN, MISS., July 9 — A racist worker went on a rampage here yesterday at the Lockheed Martin warplane plant, killing five workers — four black and one white — and wounding nine others, four black and five white. The killer, Douglas Williams, who is white, then shot himself.

Williams had long been known as a racist, "complaining about blacks and talking about shooting them." (New York Times, 7/9) The husband of one worker, Bobby McCall, said his wife had told him that Williams "said he was going to come in one day and kill up a bunch of n———-s."

Retiree Jim Payton, who had worked with Williams, said when he heard about the shooting, Williams "was the first thing that came to mind."

Another worker, Melvin Young, who witnessed the killings, said, "This should have been nipped in the bud a long time ago."

Lockheed bosses refused to say whether they knew about the racist complaints against Douglas involving violence. Lockheed makes parts for the stealth fighter jet and other war planes. It is an integral part of U.S. imperialism's war machine and its aircraft are used to kill workers in Afghanistan and Iraq. It's no surprise that such a company should harbor a racist killer and do nothing about him.

Allowing this racist to function freely ended up killing white as well as black workers. That's the logic of the bosses' racism — it hurts ALL workers.

As the bosses intensify racism to maintain profits and their system, such attacks are increasing. This same week a Mexican family's home in Farmingville, NY was fire-bombed, the same town where racists beat Mexican workers in broad daylight two years ago.

Capitalism breeds racism and war. It spells death for ALL workers worldwide.

PLP at Nea Convention: Bush War Budget Behind Racist Cuts

NEW ORLEANS, July 8 — Ten thousand teachers at the annual convention of the National Education Association (NEA), largest U.S. union, heard calls for more strikes and mass action, against reliance on politicians and for exposing the racist nature of Bush's war-budget cuts in education.

These calls, from PLP members, friends, many other teachers and youth, stand in sharp contrast to the NEA leadership's alliance with politicians and bosses.

PLP members and friends led discussion about these issues in the Peace and Justice and Hispanic Caucuses, in the California delegation and on the convention floor. Outside 500 CHALLENGES were distributed, along with 3,000 leaflets — two written at the convention itself — on the issues of class struggle and fighting racism.

This is the fifth consecutive year we've had a presence at this annual convention. [Ed. Note: Our last issue mistakenly said this was our first year.] Each year we learn more about building on and advancing our daily activities in our local unions to win teachers to the left. ✪

Strike-breaking S. Korean Pres. No Friend of Workers

Former labor leader and South Korean President Roh Moo Hyun broke a 4-day rail strike against privatization. The government declared the strike illegal and threatened to jail workers who didn't return to work. On June 28, 1,000 rail strikers were arrested in a clash with riot cops.

Strikes have surged this year, partially because the pro-capitalist Korean Confederation of Trade Unions leadership thought Roh would side with them. "President Roh…when he was campaigning for the presidency…promised that he'd make sure our demands did not fall on deaf ears." (Wall Street Journal, 7/3) This is the same nonsense AFL-CIO leaders repeat about Democratic Party candidates. It was labor's pick, Bill Clinton, who passed NAFTA, ended welfare, never lifted a finger to stop striker replacement (scabs), put 100,000 more racist cops on the streets and carried out air wars from Iraq to the former Yugoslavia. And they're getting ready to do it again to dump Bush in 2004. Union leaders' faith in capitalism and its politicians is deadly for the working class.

But South Korean workers are not being intimidated. On July 2, 30,000 struck the major auto companies, Hyundai and Kia Motors.

Roh answers to the capitalist system, not the union hacks. South Korea is Asia's third-largest economy. In the first five months of 2003, direct foreign investments are at $412 million, half of what they were for the same period a year ago. While Roh is breaking strikes in the South, he is negotiating with North Korea as a new source of cheap labor and profits (the same North Korea who's on Bush's "Axis of Evil" list).

The working class has no friends in high places. From U.S. to Germany, from Venezuela to Brazil, the working class is being whipped into line and set up for war by "lesser evil" politicians masquerading as friends. Capitalism and all its institutions dictate that the workers pay for the economic crises, no matter who sits in the seat of power. From struggles like these we can learn how to overthrow the profit system and lead the workers to power with communist revolution.✪

AFL-CIO Uses 'Jobs For Justice' To Push Youth to Democrats

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 21 — Over 1,000 workers and union activists attended the annual Jobs With Justice Conference this past weekend. Topics included organizing the unorganized, immigrant rights, health care for all, the fight against globalization and imperialist war.

The many enthusiastic young workers and union staff members did not hear any clear goals or strategy.

The conference had two main directions: (1) the 2004 elections as the main strategy to improve workers' lives; and (2) those who thought dumping Bush was important but also believed that mass struggle was necessary to move workers forward.

Every speaker told a story about the misery capitalism creates — losing their health insurance or being unable to afford it; the terrible conditions working in a sweatshop — but few had a clear vision of what to do about it.

A small group of workers organized by PLP discussed solutions from a revolutionary perspective. While encouraging and helping to organize the growing militancy of many workers, the limits of a reformist plan were also explained.

At a workshop on the Iraq war, workers warmly received the idea that imperialist war was rooted in the nature of capitalism and that only by destroying it could we end imperialist war. One worker approached a PLP member and said he had never heard a union official speak so strongly against capitalism. He left reading a CHALLENGE.

The AFL-CIO leadership has organized Jobs with Justice to win younger workers to support the Democratic Party. They tolerate the militancy of many of its members because they feel they can control them. Currently their political leadership of the organization is unchallenged. The phony "leftists" mimic the reformist line. PLP needs to lead the struggle to transform these young militant workers into communist revolutionaries.✪

Bush's 'Humanitarian' Safari Hunting for African Oil

Demonstration against Bush in South Africa

Bush began his tour of Africa with talk of sending U.S. troops to Liberia for "humanitarian reasons." Liberia, a country founded by freed U.S. slaves sent there in the early 19th century, has been devastated by a civil war. Charles Taylor, the current leader, has agreed to go into exile in Nigeria when a U.S. peacekeeping force arrives. But U.S. rulers are divided about sending a proposed 2,000 U.S. troop force. Rumsfeld and his two top generals oppose committing that many. They are being stretched too thin or inviting a Somalia-type disaster similar to Bush, Sr. dispatching troops and Clinton having to get them out. Those favoring sending troops want the U.S. to enter the "big game." Britain sent Marines to neighboring Sierra Leone, also hit by civil war, and has now turned that country into a client state. France has sent troops to the Congo and to intervene in Ivory Coast's civil war, to guarantee French interests. Meanwhile, Al Qaeda has active cells in several African countries with Moslem populations.

One thing for sure: whatever the U.S. does won't be in the interests of the people of Liberia or Africa.

CHALLENGE (7/9) reported on the Congo war that has killed some three million in the last five years, fighting over minerals — diamonds, cobalt, coltan (needed for spaceships and cellular phones) — and oil in the Great Lakes region. Western Africa is rich in oil. Nigeria will be visited by Bush, which along with Angola, provides the U.S. with as much oil as Mexico and Venezuela. Nigeria/Angola oil production will double or triple in the next 5 to 10 years. It's expected that by 2015 the U.S. will import 25% of its oil from Sub-Sahara Africa. This oil, although not as plentiful and cheap as Iraq's or Saudi Arabia's, is of high quality and easily accessible, located on the coast of Western Africa.

But oil, while a blessing for Exxon-Mobil, BP Amoco, Texaco-Chevron, Shell, Totalfina, etc., has only benefited corrupt officials in Africa. Nigeria, Africa's major oil producer, is now being hit by a militant general strike protesting fuel price increases. "The average Nigerian lives on $1 a day." (Newsweek/MSNBC.com, 7/8).

The Bushites are also boasting about spending $15 billion (over five years) to fight the AIDS epidemic ravaging several African countries. Yet Congress is already discussing cutting that amount. Plus, Bush named Randall Tobias to manage the AIDS fund for Africa. Tobias is a former CEO of Eli Lilly, the pharmaceutical giant which will make big bucks from selling drugs to AIDS victims. Tobias has also been on the Board of Directors of ATT, Kimberley-Clark, the Knight-Ridder media giant and Conoco-Phillips Petroleum. Guess whose interests he will serve in Africa?

So the "humanitarian reasons" the U.S. bosses are championing for Africa will actually fill the profit coffers of the billion-dollar corporations which run the U.S.✪

ANC Capitalists Intensify Poverty for S. Africa's Workers

The working class and oppressed masses in South Africa (S.A.) fought and defeated apartheid (white minority rule) in 1994. The African National Congress (ANC) — a united front of liberals, nationalists and the fake leftist "Communist" Party of S.A., along with masses of angry anti-racist workers and youth — led the struggle. Then under Nelson Mandela's leadership, it took power. But only the rulers' skin color changed; poverty, unemployment and oppression remains and have worsened. Crisis-ridden capitalism is attacking workers harder. This is capitalist "democracy."

The ANC government enshrined the right to "sufficient food and water" in its constitution and pledged to make sanitation and water available to every citizen by the end of 2010. This has become empty rhetoric.

To gain International Monetary Fund loans, the ANC government — committed to water privatization — is charging for water, despite widespread workers' opposition. In Shakashead, many women with bare feet and dressed in rags walk the dirt road, pushing wheelbarrows or carrying big buckets to fetch water for their families. Those who can afford it stand in line and buy water from a metered tap. A larger group scoops water from a giant fouled mud puddle. Even before privatization, tariffs generally increased during water commercialization, raising service charges 600% in Fort Beaufort black townships between 1994 and 1996.

In the poorer communities, the most horrific effect is disease from water-born pathogens such as cholera, E. coli and shigella, which causes dysentery and death. Three years ago there was a cholera epidemic of 120,000 reported cases and 260 deaths in this province. Such outbreaks occur because the majority, unable to pay, must seek water in polluted puddles, rivers and canals carrying disease and parasites.

U.S. news sources are publicizing the ANC's sellout, not because U.S. imperialism cares about S.A.'s workers' suffering, but because the majority of Africa's water contracts are with European companies. The French company Swez is the major player in S.A. The European Union (E.U.) signed a free trade agreement with S.A. in 1999 while the U.S. has just begun negotiating one. The U.S. bosses' media's exposure of the ANC's murderous water privatization is driven by U.S. imperialism's fight against the E.U.

S.A.'s working class is opposing these attacks. Thousands have marched crying, "Water for the thirsty, light for the people, homes for the homeless." Workers have fought street battles with guards to prevent evictions for failure to pay water bills. But militant struggle without a revolutionary communist line won't lead workers out of capitalism's misery. The heroic struggle of workers, students and oppressed masses to overthrow Apartheid was co-opted by black rulers who cover for the giant corporations that continue to exploit S.A. The Communist Party's opportunism opened the doors for the current situation (see CHALLENGE, 6/5/03). The working class and its allies in S.A. need to build a real communist party that can destroy capitalism and create a communist society using water and all resources to benefit the working class. (Sources: AfroINews, 11/4/02; BBCNews, 10/11/99; New York Times, 5/29/03; U.S. D.o.C. Press Release, 11/15/02)

Revolution vs. Reform in S. AFrica

My students and I watched the film The Two Trevors, depicting the class struggle in South Africa between the working class and the capitalist regime whose political front is the African National Congress (ANC). The documentary focuses on a demonstration against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in Washington, D.C. in April 2000. Upstairs in the IMF conference room sat Trevor Manuel, South Africa's Finance Minister and ANC leader. In the streets with the 30,000 protesters was a different Trevor — Trevor Ngwane, a community activist from Soweto, expelled from the ANC in 1999 for criticizing its pro-capitalist path.

Students saw that the ANC's capitalist economic policies hurt the very people who had supported and brought the party to power. The average white household has become 15% wealthier over the last five years, while the average black household has become 19% poorer.

In the July/August, 2003 issue of New Left Review, Ngwane gives a blunt assessment of the ANC's Nelson Mandela:

"By September '93 [Mandela] was touring Western capitals with the National Party Finance Minister, Derek Keys, speaking at the UN, pleading for foreign investment and guaranteeing the repatriation of profits and capital-protection measures.

"Without detracting from those twenty-seven years in jail —what that cost him, what he stood for — Mandela has been the real sell-out, the biggest betrayer of his people.... Basically the ANC was granted formal, administrative power, while the wealth of the country was retained … [by] the white capitalist elite, Oppenheimer and company."

Ngwane reports the working class is fighting ANC policies, like the privatization of electricity and water, that is making life unbearable for ordinary people. One of the many activist community groups is the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC). The electric company, soon to be privatized, has been raising electricity rates, and cutting off many people's power when they can't pay. Hundreds of thousands of poor households cannot cook or run their refrigerators.

The SECC has organized mass rallies and marches against these cutoffs. It has trained people to turn the electricity back on for Soweto residents, and cut off the electricity for local politicians, "to give them a taste of their own medicine." SECC has won concessions from the government, but not nearly enough. The struggle continues.

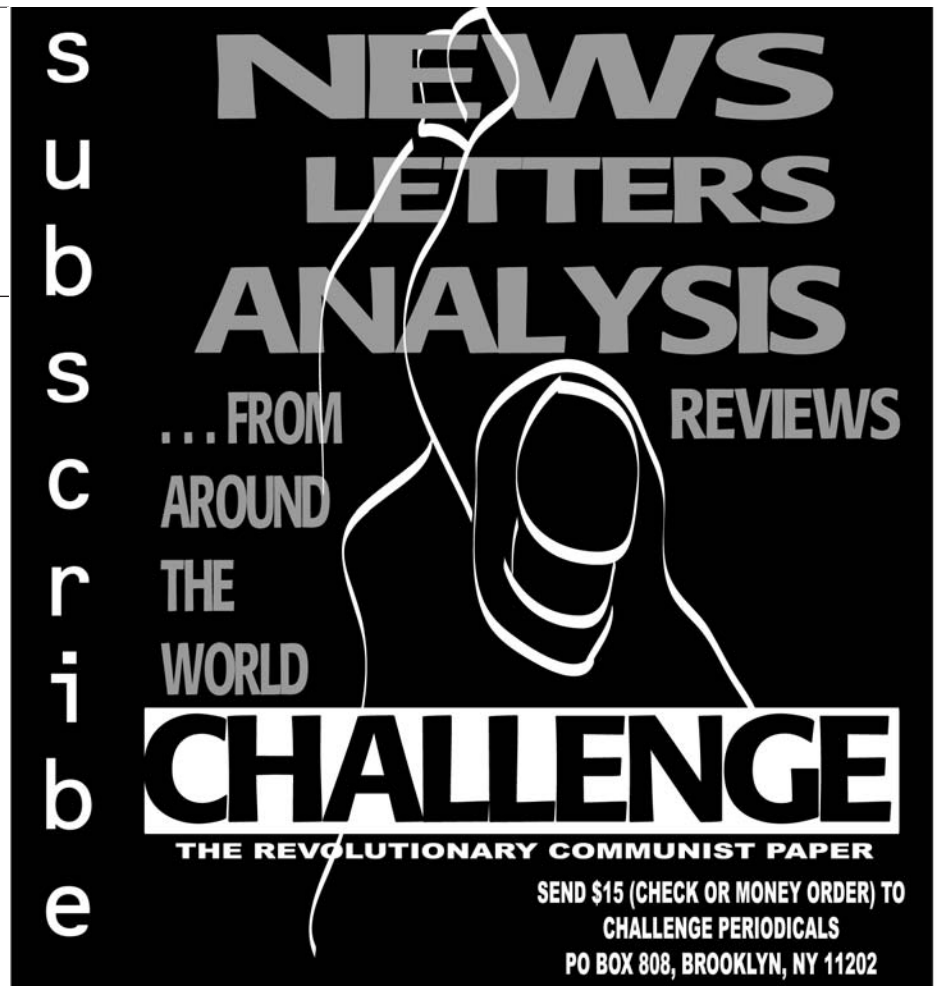
Ngwane, who proudly declares himself a Marxist, when discussing the relationship between reform and more fundamental change, offers a limited political vision:

"But in the end we had to get down to the most basic questions: what are the problems facing people on the ground that unite us most? In Soweto, it's electricity. In another area, it is water. We've learned that you have to actually organize — to talk to people, door to door, to connect with the masses. But you have to build with a vision. From Day One we argued that electricity cuts are the result of privatization. Privatization is the result of GEAR [the ANC's neo-liberal capitalist economic program]. GEAR reflects the demands of global capital, which the ANC is bent on pushing through. We cannot win this immediate struggle unless we win that greater one."

Trevor Ngwane is absolutely correct that attempts to win immediate demands — affordable water and electricity — inevitably confronts the entire capitalist system. But despite Ngwane's years of courageous activism, he omits a key Marxist concept — to rid ourselves of capitalism we must build a revolutionary communist party. With branches across the globe, this party can unite the billions of people worldwide whose lives are ravaged by capitalism, as Ngwane well knows. This party will take part in, and help lead, every struggle for immediate demands, but will do so with the vision of building a revolutionary communist party to fight for communism.

Red Teacher

LETTERS



Fight Racist Attacks On Arab/Muslim Immigrants

On June 4, the City Colleges of Chicago (CCC) barred Prof. Mohammad Salah from their classrooms, and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) removed him from their substitute teacher list. This followed an ABC News "investigation" which alerted the City Colleges that Professor Salah was on a list of "Specially Designated Terrorists." The schools maintain he was fired because on his job application he failed to disclose spending five years in an Israeli prison.

As a member of my union's executive committee, the City Colleges Contingent Labor Organizing Committee (CCCLOC), I proposed we contact Professor Salah, who like the rest of us, was a CCC part-time teacher. Quite a controversy ensued. Some felt it's our union's responsibility to support a fellow member. It was pointed out that the FBI informed both the CCC and CPS of Professor Salah's background over a year ago. Yet they were willing to exploit his labor for two more semesters before firing him.

Other members felt associating with him would hurt our contract negotiations. CCC hires us from semester to semester at relatively low pay, with no health insurance and no guarantee of future employment. Consequently CCCLOC joined the Illinois Education Association in April '02. We won a contested election for bargaining rights in April '03 and we're just entering contract negotiations. Another argument against involvement was that we don't know Prof. Salah or if he is technically part of our bargaining unit. Meanwhile, we're waiting to hear from his lawyer about whether he wants to speak to us.

Our discussions are weak so far in not examining the nature of U.S. fascism. For example, what's the media's role in perpetuating fear under fascism? Every major Chicago paper has written about Prof. Salah since his return here in 1997, including reporting government seizure of his house. So why is ABC now conducting yet another "investigation"? Also, what is the role of Democrats and other liberals in creating fear under fascism?

Although Prof. Salah has never been convicted of a crime in the U.S., Clinton put him on a "watch list" in 1995, while he was in an Israeli prison. It's also possible that the decision to get rid of Prof. Salah was made in the office of Democratic Mayor Richard Daley, who appoints the CCC's chancellor and board of trustees.

In the 1950's, when McCarthy held his congressional witch-hunt, people feared associating with communism or anyone labeled a communist could lead to job loss and being blacklisted. Today, it's fear of association with "terrorism" or anyone labeled a "terrorist."

We're beginning to discuss the nature of fascism, and communism, with CHALLENGE readers in CCCLOC. These political struggles are a prerequisite to the working class taking state power, and are the only way to deal with the fear perpetuated by bosses through their media, laws and police. Struggles like this will result in the bosses' worst fear: PLP leading the working class to victory.

Chicago Comrade

Racism is Achilles' Heel of Capitalism

The article "Back GE Workers' Fight vs. Health, Job Cuts" (CHALLENGE, 6/25) reports that at a mass rally of GE workers in Lynn, MA, PLP got a friendly response from a largely black group of workers from Cleveland and an integrated group from Louisville, but a much less friendly reaction from the mostly white workers at the Lynn plant.

The comrades write, "The positive response from the Cleveland and Louisville workers demonstrates that industrial workers, especially those from plants that are integrated or have a large black workforce, are open to our revolutionary communist message."

But the article says nothing about fighting racism. The headline did not focus on fighting racism. This is a big mistake. A militant strike will not spontaneously win workers to fight racism. It will not lead them to reject patriotism or open them to communist ideas. When racism was fought successfully, as by Chicago meatpackers in the 1930s and 1940s, it was because communists put the issue of racism front and center.

Racism is the Achilles heel of the capitalists, and the main contradiction inside our class. It is no accident that mostly white workers isolated from black workers are patriotic and, at bottom, pro-capitalist. They have bought into the bosses' racist outlook in the segregation of their daily lives. We should not underestimate this.

We should find the main ways racism is manifested in each job site, neighborhood, church or whatever, and figure out how to fight it. Fighting racism is the key to mobilizing black workers and initiating a protracted fight to win white workers away from racial isolation from their sisters and brothers. It is the key to uniting our class and winning workers to the Party.

The weakness of the article reflects the emphasis in our editorials. I grant that we need to expose how the capitalists are fighting among themselves and win workers not to take sides with the liberal imperialists against the Bush gang. But these ideas have taken up 80% or more of our editorials. Where are the editorials that help us to understand better how to fight racism, uniting our class, as the key to communism? These should be the 80%!

We need to expose the racism of the U.S./Zionist road to peace, the plan to create Bantustans for Palestinians as bad as anything ever done in South Africa. Unfortunately the editorial in the same issue says nothing about this or about fighting, and linking, anti-Palestinian and anti-black racism.

When we fight racism, our Party grows. Workers have responded, seeing how racism is at the core of capitalism. We need to shift our emphasis. Put the fight against racism at the center of our editorials and at the center of our practical work.

A comrade

"We should find the main ways racism is manifested in each job site, neighborhood, church or whatever, and figure out how to fight it. Fighting racism is the key to mobilizing black workers and initiating a protracted fight to win white workers away from racial isolation from their sisters and brothers. It is the key to uniting our class and winning workers to the Party."

—A Comrade

GIs' Unshined Boots Lead to Red Politics

Recently a friend told me about his military experiences. His attempt to discuss imperialism, the war in Afghanistan and racism with his fellow soldiers was largely unsuccessful. Members of his unit seemed disinterested. He was frustrated with them for seemingly being apolitical, and with himself for being unable to engage them in discussions of pro-working class politics. He did manage one strong political relationship during basic training around the fight against racism, but for the most part, something was missing. He completed Advanced Individual Training with even less success.

He mentioned a story he had read about an incident during the Vietnam War. A group of officers and NCOs (Non-Commissioned Officers) had helicoptered into a combat unit for an inspection. The officers scrutinized the troops and decided they needed to shine their boots. The GIs were weary of being in the jungle and tired of obeying the officers. The order to shine their boots was the last straw. A few moments after the helicopter had lifted off to return the officers to their base, it was shot down, killing everyone on board.

After reading that, he realized that throughout basic training his fellow soldiers' biggest complaint was having to shine their boots. "I didn't know it at the time but my fellow soldiers had a lot to teach me," he said. They actually were talking politics but he just wasn't listening. While Afghanistan and 9/11 had come up, a lot of the group discussions were about being a "squared-away" soldier — pressed uniforms, highly shined boots and about our training. Being forced to shine their boots was the drill sergeants' way of whipping obedience into them. When they complained about it, or refused to do it, or used "instant shine," it was their way of resisting. It was this same sense of dissatisfaction — although to a much greater degree — that led those soldiers to shoot down the helicopter in Vietnam.

I remembered the classic Bolshevik movie "Potemkin," based on a Russian sailors' mutiny over being fed maggot-ridden meat. "Rotten meat and dull boots," I thought. "This is what communist politics are all about!"

My friend showed me that politics plays itself out in everything — from how the army trains soldiers to work as a team (but of course in this case, only in the interests of, and under the leadership of the bosses); to how some soldiers evaded details (a rebellious tendency). The opportunities to raise politics abound. "I just didn't grasp the every-day politics of working as a team, details and highly-shined boots."

A Comrade

U.S. War in Iraq Mirrors 1898 Seizure Of Philippines

Last year, a CHALLENGE article described how GIs in the Philippines organized a "return-home" movement after the defeat of the Japanese fascists during World War II. The brass wanted to keep the GIs there to fight the Huks, the communist-led guerrillas who had done most of the jungle fighting against the Japanese. The GI's actually thanked the Huks for saving many of their lives. Mass protests of GI's were organized by some left-wing soldiers and foiled the brass's plans.

At the turn of the century, the Filipino people, like the Iraqis of today, were "liberated" by U.S. bosses from an oppressive ruler, in that case Spain. Militant armed movements in the Philippines and Cuba were fighting Spanish colonialism. The U.S. was an expanding imperialist country and, as it has done many times, picked on a weak but brutal colonial country like Spain.

Those U.S. forces wanting war against Spain, led by warmongering newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, needed an excuse to invade its colonies (just like Bush needed Saddam's non-existent WMDs). The U.S. was still reeling from a recent recession. President McKinley and others feared stronger European powers might side with Spain. Then the pro-war forces went into action.

On Feb. 15, 1898, the U.S. battleship Maine mysteriously blew up in the port of Havana, killing 260 U.S. sailors. Hearst sent a reporter to Havana to "get the goods" on Spain. He wired Hearst that he could find no evidence of Spanish involvement. Hearst then sent back his famous telegram: "You supply the pictures. I'll supply the war!"

Congressional moderates gave in and, just as today's Democrats voted for war against Iraq, on April 25, 1898, Congress declared war on Spain. It lasted only four months. A peace treaty gave Spain $20 million to leave Cuba, Guam, Puerto Rico and the 7,100 islands of the Philippines Archipelago. The U.S. replaced Spain as the new colonial master. It took Cuba several years to get rid of the Platt Amendment, which had turned it into a virtual U.S. colony. The Philippines only became "independent" after WW II. Guam and Puerto Rico are still U.S. colonies.

As usual, the racist arrogance of U.S. bosses emerged. McKinley, the Bush of his time, admitted he had no idea where the Philippines were. His politics of "benevolent assimilation" was to bring "Christian civilization" to the Filipinos. This "civilizing" became a brutal three-year war killing 200,000 Filipinos (mostly civilians) and 4,000 U.S. soldiers (10 times as many as had died in the Spanish-American war). Mass terror ruled. A Sedition Law imposed long jail terms and even death on anyone speaking, writing or publishing "scurrilous libels" against the U.S. colonial government.

But the Filipinos, outgunned by U.S. forces, continued fighting a guerrilla war. U.S. bosses envisioned an expanding empire, from this archipelago to all of Asia, including China. "We will not abandon our part in the mission of our race, trustee under God, of the civilization of the world, " proclaimed then Indiana Rep. Senator Albert Beveridge (Wall Street Journal, 7/2/03).

Many honest forces in the U.S. opposed this massacre. Mark Twain was a leading voice, who — contrary to many of today's intellectuals — recognized that the U.S. was already an imperialist power. He sympathized with the Filipinos being victimized by the "progress and civilization" foisted on them by the "Blessings-of-Civilization Trust."(WSJ)

As in the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan, massive racism helped lay the basis for public support. In 1893, at the Chicago World's Fair, Filipinos were brought over to be "put on display" for fairgoers to view as inferior "sub-humans." This helped people to accept the war to come five years later.

In championing mass terror, lies and war, the U.S. ruling class is number one.✪

RED EYE ON THE NEWS

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS FROM MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS THAT CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION:Abbreviations: NYT=New York Times, GW=Guardian Weekly (UK)

Workers could run society

Employees of IMPA, an aluminum plant in Buenos Aires, took charge of it to keep it from closing….

Across this nation of 37 million people, at least 160 factories employing an estimated 10,000 people are now being run as cooperatives by their employees, ranging from a tractor in Cordoba to a tile and ceramics plant in Patagonia….

The IMPA workers have even voted to turn space into a neighborhood cultural and arts center. Dance, drama and music classes and performances now take place regularly there, movies are shown in a small theater on an upper floor and artists have been allowed to set up studios where they paint, draw and sculpture….

The workers are also more willing to make personal sacrifices in the name of the corporation [they've seized]. At Ghelco, for example, "everyone makes the same wages now, from directors to the janitors…."

The original owners of some plants have resurfaced, with hopes of reclaiming their proprietorship. That has led to legal struggles and, in one case, even violence. (NYT, 7/8)

Racial arrests will go on

President Bush issued guidelines today barring federal agents from using race or ethnicity in their routine investigations, but the policy carves out clear exemptions for investigations involving terrorism and national security matters….

Arab-Americans and civil rights groups said the exemptions in the White House policy would give the authorities legal justification to single out Middle Easterners and others….

"It's largely a rhetorical statement [said the ACLU's Washington office director]. The administration is trying to soften its image, but it's smoke and mirrors." (NYT, 6/18)

US flouts law in Iraq

They cannot…be called terrorists — nor does the US have any right to try guerrillas who attack occupation troops as criminals, which Bremer announced it plans to do. It is an almost universally accepted principle that a people occupied by a foreign power has the right to use armed force to resist….(GW, 7/2)

I TRIED TO GET ANGRY AT BUSH FOR ATTEMPTING TO TAKE AWAY MY OVERTIME PAY ... BUT THEN I REMEMBERED...
I DON'T HAVE A JOB.
UNEMPLOYMENT

Elections betray workers

"I am deeply impressed with President Lula," Horst Kohler, managing director of the International Monetary Fund, told reporters recently.

The Brazilian president barely resembles the candidate who some U.S. critics feared was too close to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. Indeed, his biggest political struggle to date is keeping the lid on the rebellion from his Workers' Party most loyal base — trade unions, leftist politicians and anti-poverty groups — who complain that Lula has sold them out. (GW, 7/2)

Shaping Iraq for profits

Many point out that Bremer is no expert on Iraqi politics. But that was never the point. He seems to be an expert at profiting from the war on terror, and at helping US multinationals make money in far-off places where they are unwelcome. In other words, he is the perfect man for the job.

Bremer's "de-Ba'athification" takes on new meaning. Is he working only to get rid of Ba'ath party members, or is he also working to shrink the public sector as a whole so that hospitals, schools and even the army are primed for privatization by US firms? Just as reconstruction is the guise for privatization, de-Ba'athification looks a lot like downsizing. (GW, 6/18)

No big biz crooks in jail

President Bush's rhetoric doesn't meet the reality test….

On declaring support for corporate reforms, August 4, 2002: "No more easy money for corporate criminals, just hard time."

Ten months later, no corporate criminal has been sentenced to prison, though a few higher-ups were taken away in handcuffs for show. The disgraced Kenneth Lay, former Enron chief executive officer and a member of Bush's "Pioneers" (millionaires who raised a record $193 million in the Presidential campaign), is still enjoying his luxurious homes. And the investigation by the Securities and Exchange Commission of Haliburton's accounting practices while Vice-President Dick Cheney headed the company didn't prevent its winning a no-bid contract for oil-related work in Iraq. (Atlanta Journal, 6/3)

Orwell helps ruling class

Orwell wrote of Animal Farm: "Of course, I intended it primarily as a satire on the Russian Revolution….

I meant the moral to be that revolutions only effect a radical improvement when the masses are alert and know how to chuck out their leaders….

This raises as many questions as it seeks to answer. The Russian working-class masses were as "alert" as they possibly could be in 1917, and the revolution was neither violent nor conspiratorial….

The truth is that Orwell wrote next to nothing about the Russian revolution and his interpretation of it was as vague as his denunciations of its betrayal was devastating….

Orwell gave British intelligence the names of communists — like any fink from the Ministry of Truth….

Again and again he denounced…the "quietism" that leaves the Blimps and their detestable capitalism system intact. But how were these things to be changed? If not by revolution, how? (GW, 6/18)

CIA helps protect profits

The State Department recently issued a collection of previously classified documents that shed new light on the Central Intelligence Agency's role in the June 1954 coup in Guatemala that ousted the president, Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán. Mr. Arbenz had clashed with the United Fruit Company….

Here are excerpts from documents related to the coup plot….

Tasks for Chief of Station, Guatemala

a. Controlled penetration of the Communist Party

b. Controlled penetration of the major labor unions….

Consider it highly important to mobilize anti-communist activities of the Catholic Church dignitaries and of Catholic lay organizations….This could be done, for instance, by describing graphically how the local church would be turned into a meeting hall for the "Fighting Godless," how the reader's children would have to spend their time with the "Red Pioneers," how the pictures of Lenin, Stalin and Malenkov would replace the pictures of the Saints in every home….

Telegram from C.I.A. headquarters to PBSUCCESS headquarters, June 24, 1954:

We now prepared authorize bombing specific targets in [Guatemala City] area….

Telegram from C.I.A. headquarters to PBSUCCESS headquarters, June 30, 1954:

Heartiest congratulations upon outcome developments past forty-eight hours. A great victory has been won. (NYT, 7/6)

Bush, Democrats: Two Faces of War vs. Workers

U.S. rulers are waging war on two fronts: first on Afghanistan, Iraq and countries soon to be named, as George W. Bush & Co. try to extend U.S. imperialism's reign far into the future. Second, the war raging on the home front against the U.S. working class. Grinding us down economically and politically is a crucial component of the bosses' long-range preparation for fascism and war.

Bush's version of the "War Against Terror" includes an assault on workers' bargaining power and right to unionize. The Department of Homeland Security gave him an excuse to consolidate 170,000 federal workers into a "super agency" and strip them of all rights to collective bargaining and civil service protection.

In addition, Bush has played the privatization card, putting the mainly unionized jobs of 850,000 federal workers up for bids by scab and low-wage subcontractors. This attack on public sector unions dates back to the Carter administration. The private sector provided the campaign's first target. Today only 9% of all private sector workers belong to unions. This decline has given the bosses a blank check to slash health insurance, paid holidays, pensions and legally enforceable grievance procedures.

But Bush is merely following the liberal Democrat Bill Clinton's economic terrorism against workers. Clinton's slave-labor "Workfare" scheme threw millions off welfare and forced them to replace unionized workers for the equivalent of a welfare check.

Bush bailed out the U.S. airline industry to the tune of $15 billion but did nothing to help 100,000 laid-off airline workers. He invoked the Taft-Hartley Act to end two airline strikes, stating that "economic activity" (i.e. profits) was the same as "national security."

Last fall, a coalition of shipping companies locked out 10,000 longshoremen at 29 West Coast ports. This attack on the International Longshore and Warehouse Union was a clear warning to the remnants of organized labor. Homeland Security czar Tom Ridge called the ILWU brass to explain that any strike or work stoppage would be a threat to "national security" and that the government would use troops to break it.

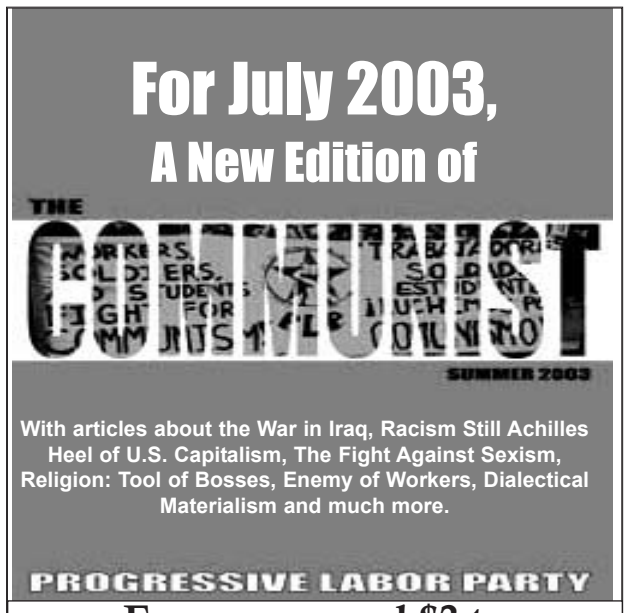
The current Bush budget provides a big increase in funds for auditing and investigating unions, while at the same time slashing provisions to enforce health and safety laws, child-labor regulations and minimum-wage compliance. Unions must now itemize every expense over $2,000 related to organizing, striking and legislative or political activity.

Bush's latest attack exempts millions of workers from overtime pay protection by reclassifying them as "administrators," "professionals," or "executives."

At the same time, racist unemployment is at a nine-year high, with black workers having "considerably more trouble finding employment than whites." (New York Times, 7/4)

Liberal and not so liberal Democrats are trying to exploit Bush's assaults on unions and his record on the economy to recapture the presidency in 2004. They want to do a craftier job than Bush of disguising fascist attacks on us as a "boon" to the working class. While Bush and the Republicans emphasize productivity and tax breaks for the rich, the Democrats worry about winning workers to a lifetime of loyalty and sacrifice. Massachusetts Senator John Kerry's "national service" plan has sounded the opening charge. Other Democrats like Howard Dean will follow suit. Their model is the Roosevelt New Deal of the 1930s, when a few crumbs thrown to workers enabled the government to mobilize for World War II and launch the U.S. as the world's dominant imperialist power. Conditions have changed since then, but the rulers' need to enlist millions of workers to support their murderous designs remains constant.

All the politicians, Democrat or Republican, represent one faction or another of the bosses. We mustn't fall for any of their schemes. Our class interests have nothing in common with theirs.✪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Black GI's Led Rebellions in Vietnam War

(This concludes the review of "American Patriots, The Story of Blacks in the Military," by Gail Buckley. The author depicts black soldiers trying to defend "their country," while fighting the virulent racism they encountered. She cites Colin Powell as the "heights" that black soldiers have achieved, and doesn't expose patriotism as serving the ruling class and their imperialist wars (However, WW II had an antifascist character and it was led by the communist forces of the Soviet and Chinese Red Armies). This series concentrates on the bravery and rebelliousness of black soldiers despite intense racism. Our previous issues covered the Civil War, World War I, the Spanish Civil War and World War II.)

THE VIETNAM WAR

By the time the U.S. war of aggression rolled around, black soldiers had been "integrated" into the military with a vengeance. While 10% of the U.S. population, "In 1968 blacks made up some 9.8 percent of military forces — but close to 20 percent of all combat troops and 14.1 percent of total U.S. fatalities in Vietnam." (p. 415) Like World War II, it was a draft army. But unlike that anti-fascist war, this one attacked people that had been fighting first French, and now U.S. imperialism.

The racism started early, and was directed against black soldiers as well as the Vietnamese. Wayne Smith, a black youth from an integrated, working-class neighborhood in Providence, R.I., told the author that when he was 17 "he joined the Army on the 'buddy system,' a recruitment ploy that promised buddies [they] would serve together. 'The deal didn't hold,' he said, and after basic training his white friend got a safe, stateside office job and Smith was assigned to train to be a combat medic, and go to Vietnam….

"'Basic training was a horrible revelation,' he said….'I couldn't understand how an American Army trying to motivate people to fight an enemy could be so brutal to their own people. Nothing was safe. It was all about survival.' Two black sergeants regularly attacked black recruits, 'to show whites they would treat us as badly or worse than whites.'

"Smith's disillusionment deepened in the midst of pervasive racism, including the routine reference throughout the military to all Vietnamese as dinks and gooks, which made it easier, he said, to 'psych you up to kill.'" (pp. 421-23)

"The correspondent Jonathan Schell heard American officers sing a song that was a macabre comment on civilian casualties:

"Bomb the schools and churches.
"Bomb the rice fields, too.
"Show the children in the courtyards
"What napalm can do." (p. 400)

The effects of racism continued far into the future. "Nearly two decades after the end of the war, blacks who had fought in disproportionate numbers, were still suffering disproportionate postwar ills. Some 17 percent of veterans diagnosed with post traumatic stress disorder are black….About 275,000 black soldiers served in Vietnam. As many as 30 percent of all homeless veterans in major cities were black, and black vets were three times likelier than whites to be unemployed." (p. 444)

Yet the author never deals with capitalist super-exploitation worth hundreds of billions in profits as the source of this racism, or with the GIs' tremendous opposition to the war. There was widespread rebellions, many led by black GI's. Over half a million GI's deserted during the course of the war. Six of seven aircraft carriers (used to launch bombers over North Vietnam) were immobilized by sabotage from U.S. sailors.

GI's published 144 underground papers inside Vietnam and on these warships opposing the war and offering bounties to GI's who shot particular officers. There is only a passing reference to this "fragging" of officers (by fragmentation grenades), and interestingly enough it involved Colin Powell himself: "In the summer of 1968, Powell moved his cot every night, partly to thwart the Vietcong, partly to avoid 'attacks on authority from within the battalion itself.'" (p. 411)

These events prompted U.S. Marine Colonel Robert Heinl, a 27-year combat veteran and official Marines historian, to write an article entitled, "The Collapse of the Armed Forces," for the Armed Forces Journal in June 1971. This was the birth of the Vietnam Syndrome, the unwillingness of GI's and workers back home to suffer huge causualities for U.S. imperialist adventures.✪

Black Sailors Refused Racist Orders to Load Death Ship

In 1944, 50 black sailors were convicted of mutiny. The incident was recalled this week on the occasion of the death of Freddie Meeks, 83, one of the 50 convicted.

"On July 17, 1944, an explosion ripped through the Navy's Port Chicago ammunition depot…[near]San Francisco while Navy stevedores, all of them black, were loading shells and bombs…bound for the Pacific.

"The blast, its cause never determined, killed 320 men, 202 of them black sailors….It vaporized a 1,200-foot pier [and] sank two ships…." (New York Times, 6/30)

Three weeks later, 258 black sailors — with no formal training for the dangerous job — were sent to unload ammunition at nearby Mare Island depot. Meeks was among 50 who refused. He had helped recover the body parts from the Port Chicago explosion. "To see the wreckage, and all the people that were killed, the way it blew them all to pieces," Meeks later told the Times, "you didn't want to go and fool with it anymore."

In October, the fifty were convicted of mutiny at a court martial and sentenced to 15 years. They appealed as victims of racism (black sailors were restricted to laborers' and cooks' jobs), but the Navy upheld the conviction. The 50 were released in 1946. In 1984, a Navy review panel again upheld the convictions, saying "race was not a factor in the verdicts," while finding that "assigning black sailors to manual labor had been 'clearly motivated by race.'"

Although pardoned, the convictions were never expunged.✪